

May 2009 to June 2009

(Volume 26)





MAY 2009 (Volume 26)





"I" is the shortest word and yet it seems to be used more than any other. Perhaps I am also guilty of this but as it is my thoughts and memories I probably can be excused. However the feelings and comments should reflect how things are at the time of writing and also the way I fit into my environment etc so forgive me if 'I' seems to dominate the intro....

A strange feeling of political distrust is evident all around. Listening to phone-ins is a great passion for Lynn and myself and you really get a 'feel' for what Jo Public is really thinking. Calls are not motivated by press pressure and they reflect all strata of society. Also as different presenters seem to attract different listeners ie. varying levels of intelligence etc one can get a broad spectrum of feelings about every issue and this is where there seems to be a real disillusionment regarding our political system. All corrupt and a waste of time voting as all the main parties are equally in it for their own agenda and not for political good. Obviously this is not true of all but certainly the majority are not sincere. The problem is what should one do when elections are close?? Don't vote and by wasting your vote there is a chance that the lunatic fringe will get in by virtue of their few votes counting disproportionately high. Vote for the existing party and you get more of the same but with a vengeance that they assume (wrongly) that they now have a mandate to continue their wayward ways. Vote for the 'others' as I think will happen thinking that a change is called for - assuming "they must be better than the present lot" I reckon what will happen is that everyone will be 'hanging' on in there totally undecided and then clever sound-bites or a scandal just prior to election day will sway massive votes. As a country we are being really manipulated even though we like to say we are freer than ever.

Is that naïve or is that naïve!!!!

Read my blogs from the start and they are certainly more cynical as I get older (and wiser???). I think Lynn and I are rapidly becoming more grumpy or is that a sign of aging...??

On the family front we could not be happier. The kids are great and the grandkids are great. Mum is great and the family relationship between us all is so ...yes you've guessed it ...great.

I am starting this latest volume in my study with Blue Grass music on the internet on my PC from the US and incense burning on my desk. Weather has been pretty good today and Mum came round for dinner and the three of us sat in the garden in the sun and relaxed and chatted after a wonderful meal cooked by Lynn. I made home-made creamy vanilla ice cream with our new ice cream maker.

And now on with the latest volume.....





| | What I Love | What I Hate |
|----|--|---|
| 1 | Gardening and travel tv programmes | Public spitting – on the increase |
| 2 | The unexpected calls from kids and grandkids just to say “hi” | Speed cameras and CCTV |
| 3 | Reading a good book and finding that everyone in the family feels the same about reading | The new attitude “phone us to report....” Anything from antisocial behaviour to benefit fraud. All wrong....but snooping is miles worse...Think about the implications |
| 4 | Friends – becoming more important as time passes | Litter and noise pollution. A walk in the woods spoilt by motorway traffic noise |
| 5 | Looking forward to the day when this column outweighs the adjacent column | |
| 6 | | |
| 7 | | |
| 8 | | |
| 9 | | |
| 10 | | |
| 11 | | |



A great evening at Judy's 'special' birthday at The Canal Museum celebrated with the



usual Davies flair....





Yes our daughter has reached 40.. Guess how Lynn and I felt. What a fabulous night. An Argentinian BBQ restaurant behind stables in downtown Woodside Park folks.









I feel I must say a few words.....



Wow this is thrilling



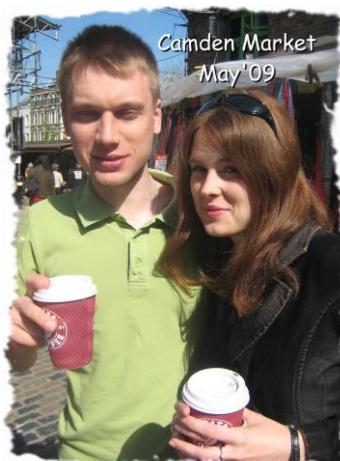
The exploding popper went bang !!





An icon that
is doomed

Some things take me straight back to my childhood and the sherbet dab is soon to be no more...and this is progress ????



In May '09 Mariuz and Alex came over for a short visit from Poland and we met them at Camden Market and enjoyed short walk along the Canal and quick market tour. It was great to see the happy couple again and rumours are that they may marry next year.



Camden Lock Walk May '09



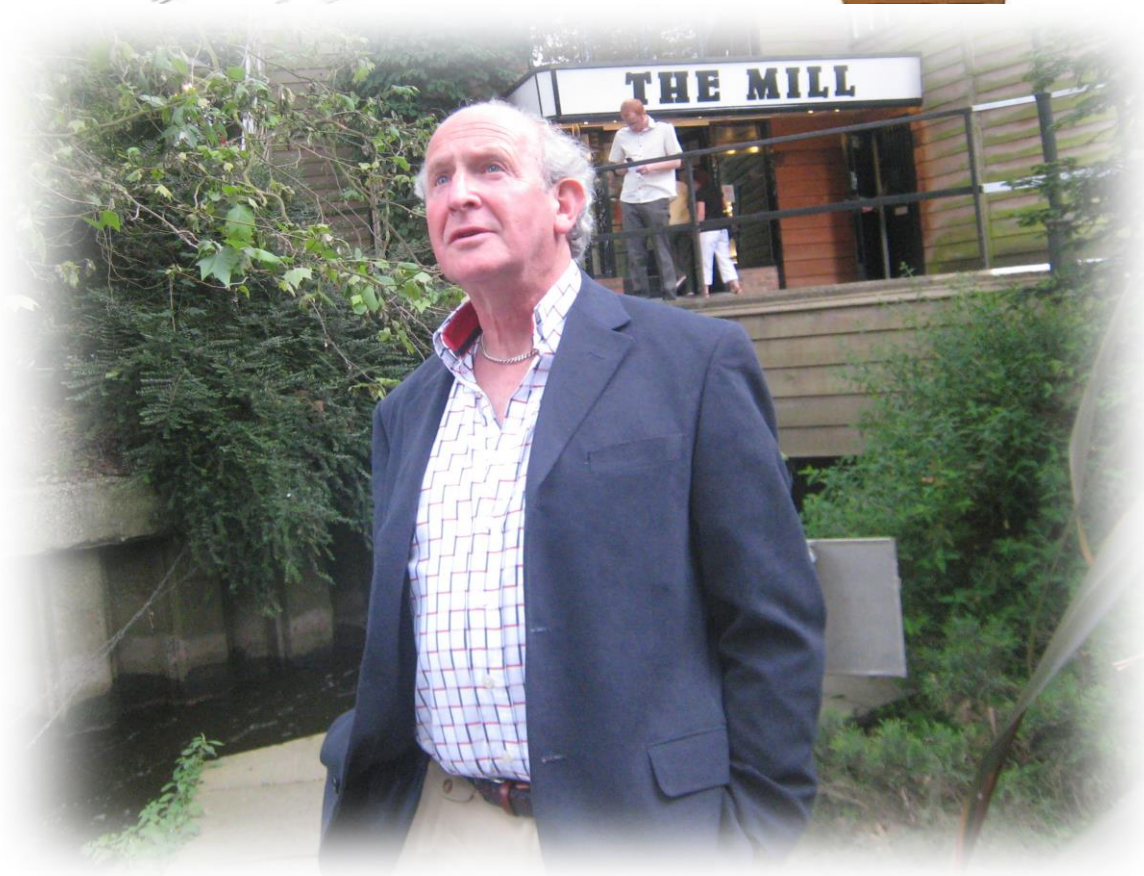


Alex loved this dress so when we went back we bought it for her. She looked lovely in it





The Mill at Sonning was a great setting for a May evening out. A meal in the mill and a farce-type comedy (not our favourite comedy form) was enjoyable despite the drive either end

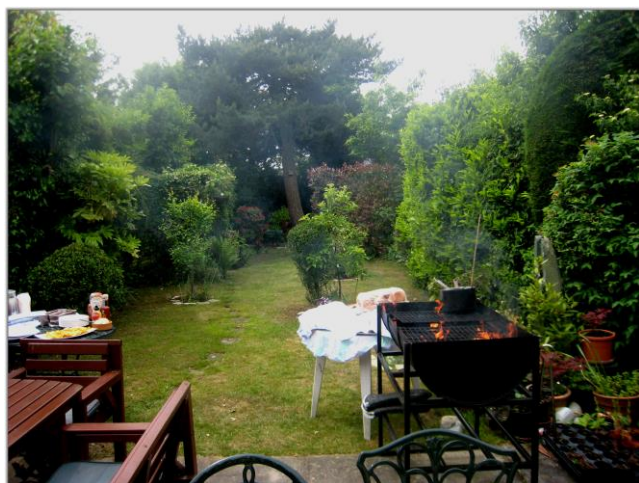




Heath with Norma, Viv and Walter....lot's of rabbit but no rabbits

A walk on the



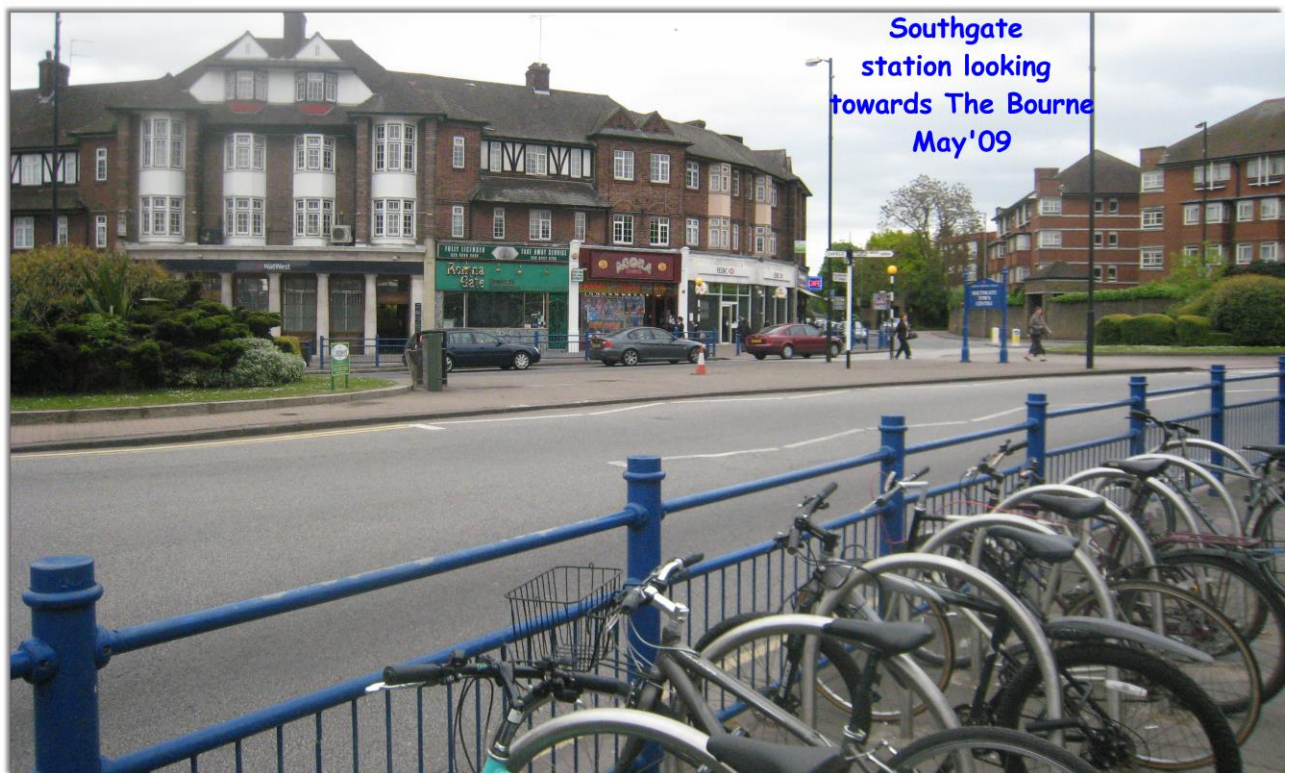


All set for the BBQ at home...The whole (ex) Ludlow clan came with their respective husbands and Mum - it was a great afternoon. Jo even popped in....





Southgate from
the station
May '09



Southgate
station looking
towards The Bourne
May '09



May '09 When something new appears it quickly becomes so accepted that one can not remember what preceded it... so this is the 'before' photo



May '06



Just two minutes from The
South Bank and back in time
May'09



We never tire of the contrasts in London. Cheek by jowl there are massive modern offices and often little forgotten corners hidden away like this. London is a constant delight and we know loads of these quirky little spots and we will get some of these gems as we travel around and pop them into the 'Photo History' for no more reason than that we love them.





Afternoon tea as it should be done. Smiling staff show you to your table in the garden of the Mandarin (ex Hyde Park) Hotel. There are rugs if it is chilly and even sun tan lotion in the unlikely event of excessive heat. Wonderful little cakes and sandwiches and a really delightful afternoon out with Peter and Maryanne





Another fantastic few days at Heddons Gate Hotel. Weather was great and the Hotel (and food) as good as ever.



This is our beach... ah !! - that's better (the joys of Photoshop !!!)



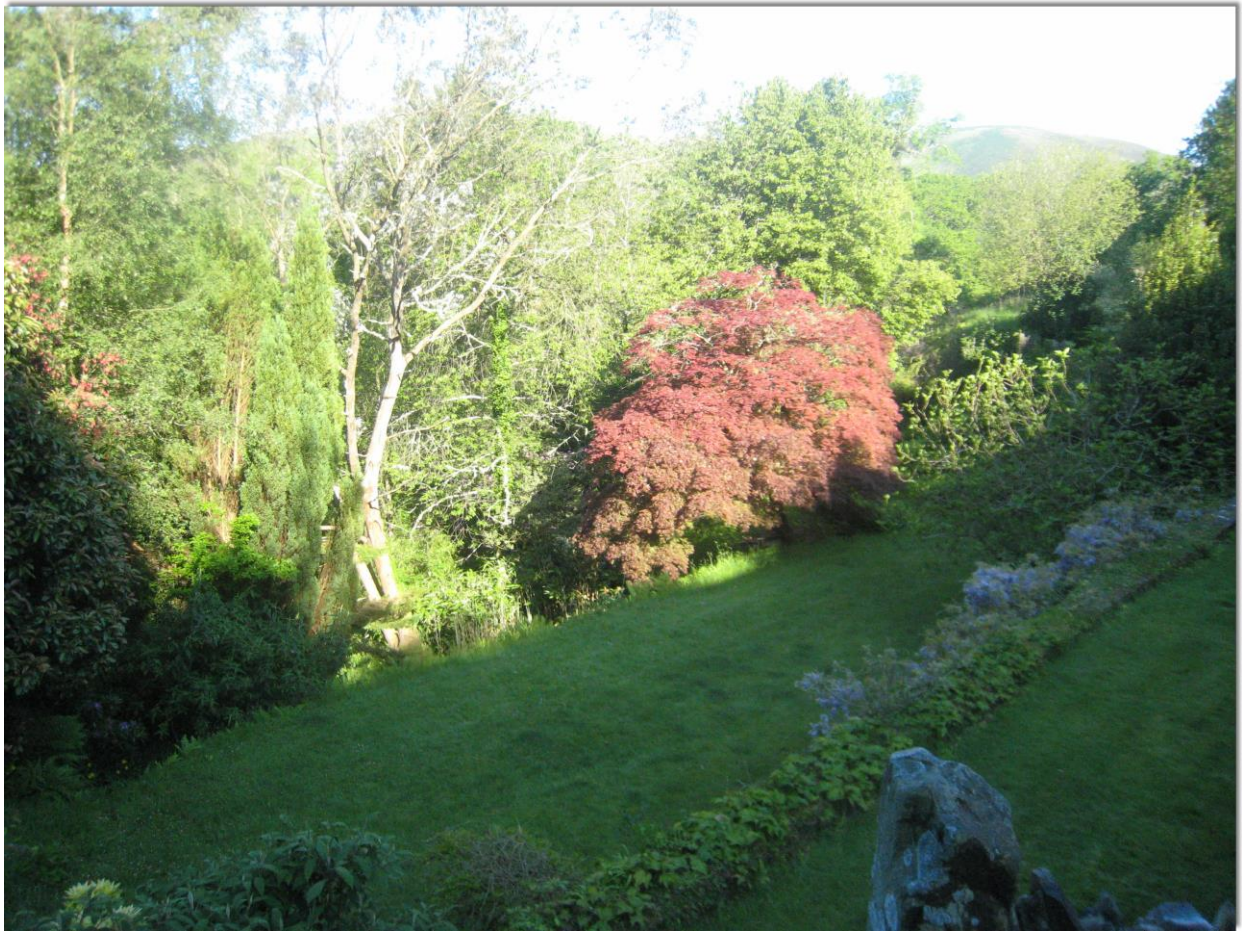


Our special setting with the existing oaks now very tall and the new sapling for Julia



A totally memorable place...I think the mini video captures the waves and stillness of the sunset





We managed to climb down through the undergrowth and reached the coastal path below. Coming up was an exercise in persistence and Lynn frightened the birds with her screams of laughter when she went flying





This was a first. As we rounded the bend on the coast path the clouds were rolling off the cliffs and the sea below us was hidden from view for a while until the sun burnt them off.





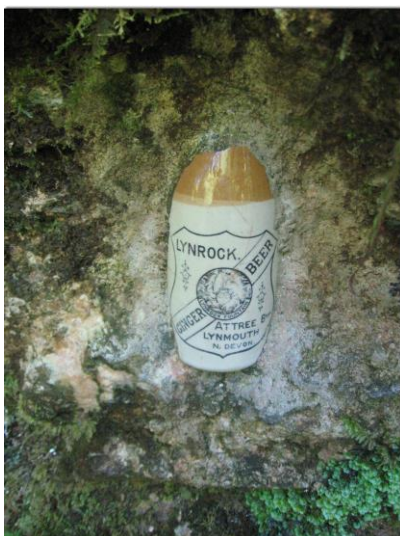
Lynn and others enjoying the food at Watersmeet. The great tree that graced the lawns has gone. It was so splendid but obviously reached the end of a long life



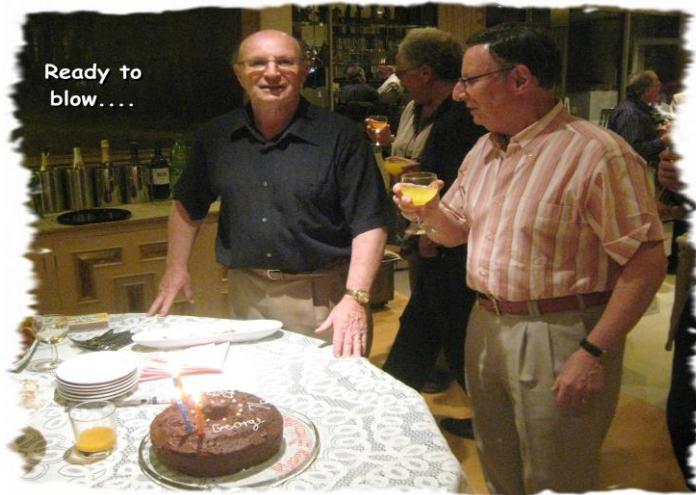
Nothing is nicer than cooling off with your feet in the icy water.
It is hard to realise that the floods did such terrible damage here in the 50's



August 1952...



This is the site of The Lynrock Mineral Water Factory destroyed by the floods



Peter and George celebrating their combined 70th birthday. Guess it's hard to realise that we are old and our friends are sometimes a bit older still. A sobering thought

Walking with the 'old lads'. Henley to Cookham with an occasional food stop in between (If truth were known it was a food stop interrupted by the occasional walk)





The lunatics are running the asylum.

The white van parked on the double yellow line is a council surveillance vehicle with a camera mounted on the roof caused a traffic hazard whilst filming an 'alleged criminal act' (parking on the pavement). When the council was questioned about the logic in this they said it was acceptable whilst 'enforcing' Sense does not come into the equation.



June '09 Lynn and I went to Oslo Court with Mum to celebrate her birthday. We had a dignified lunch - elderly waiters, groaning platefuls of food in splendid surroundings combined to make a great lunchtime meal out followed by a leisurely stroll in Regents Park



Resting for a moment after lunch....



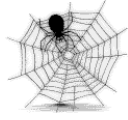


Angela and DP were putting on a show for kids with partial funding from an Arts Council grant and we looked after the kids for a day, whilst they did the final rehearsals













Saving for her old age...not a 'veggie' choice of savings scheme

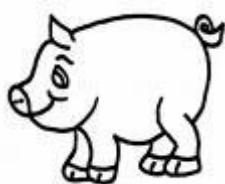








We went to a local farm at lunchtime and the sleeping piglets seemed to form a perfect circle



Curled up
and sleepy







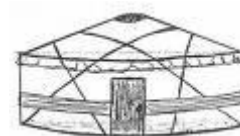
A great picnic in the grounds of Orwell Park



The kids live in a fantastic setting surrounded by farm land and with great views down to the Orwell Estuary and across to Pin Mill.



Good 'ole grandparents still have enough energy for a 'kick-around'. This is the village green where the Yurt was being set up ready for the week-long performances for the schoolchildren





The flyers for the show.....



Unloading the show paraphernalia



And willing help with the bunting assembly





Setting up inside the yurt

Getting ready for bed...



The whole project was a great success and the self-evaluation document that was prepared was enhanced by the great feedback provided via the teachers at the local schools



SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

"Monster Magic"

15-20 June 2009



Victoria Field, Nacton.

June 2009

This pilot project was a great success. The response to Monster Magic by children, parents, teachers and residents was heart-warming. The children were captivated by the fairy tale and the questions it raised, and they were inspired by the travelling lifestyle they encountered. Local residents and children also had the opportunity to take part in the open session, at which there was an electric atmosphere.

LESSONS LEARNT

- On the first morning it became clear that we could take 30 rather than 15 children for one session, by dividing into two groups, one performing Monster Magic with Angela, and the second playing games with Jan. This realisation will make next year's tour more financially viable for schools.
- A MARQUEE is necessary for indoor games if the weather is bad. Fortunately the sun shone on this occasion. The gazebo provided shade but would not have been sufficient in the rain.
- When a group of Year 6 arrived in place of a Year 2 group we learnt that Monster Magic worked well with this age group and they found the story a good stimulus for raising ethical questions. This increased age range will also make the project more viable for schools.



- TUESDAY afternoon, the open session was very successful in providing the opportunity for villagers, parents, older children and education professionals to come and take part.
- MARKETING is an area that could be improved it was labour intensive. Though we were fully booked, in the future many more school need to be contacted. There will need to be improvement in IT skills. Understanding spreadsheets and improving touch-typing stand out as important time savers.



"Welcome!"

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

A) Developing Skills in

1) Evaluating feedback.

During the performance we learnt to gauge the level of fear experienced by the children on seeing the wolf, and judge when to lift the level and when to drop it away. We concentrated on how to use character to carry the narrative forward and incorporate the children's spontaneous responses and improvisation. This was especially valuable for Darren (the Wolf) who had never worked with children in an interactive performance before.



Round the Campfire after the performance Angela facilitated debate through questioning the motives of the characters and the responses of "The Children" in the story to them. The children taking part also play "The Children".



Chatting together.

The children translated the themes of diversity and prejudice that were in mind when devising the fairytale, into trust and forgiveness.

The big questions that emerged around these themes were:

1) When, why and how did the children trust the wolf? 2) Should we forgive Marble Loo?

We were able to use the discussions to evaluate the children's understanding of the performance itself and the issues raised. This was very useful in terms of experimenting with the comprehension of different age groups. It was also stimulus for generating new ideas.

General Feedback.

The responses of parents, teachers and children over the days of the project were enormously appreciative. In the shape of gifts of fruit, home made cakes, cards, letter and pictures from schools, phone calls and visits to the camp. It was an overwhelming response and demonstrated the value of the experience.



Running in the grass.



2) Discovering methodology

This technique of interactive story telling, with embedded ethical questions has proved effective in stimulating good discussion in the age groups involved. These were from Pre-School to Year 6. The level on which discussion took place was led by the children and therefore appropriate to their comprehension. Employing a fairytale as the starting point enabled us to encompass both simple and more complex ideas. The pre-school children considered the wolf and how they were initially afraid of him but he won their trust. This raises questions about who we trust and why. The older ages were interested in the behaviour of Marble Lou how to respond to her actions.



Wolfie.



Marbel Lou.

I was surprised at the level of sympathy the children felt for the Marble Lou, the "bad" character. They displayed psychological insight through their comments;

"She didn't like children, so she didn't like herself either.." Jason, 7.

"She was miserable and so she lied."

"Someone didn't forgive her when she was little..." Georgina, 8.

"...so she can't forgive herself." Ben, 7.

"Prison would make her more angry" Millie, 10.

It felt appropriate to discuss issues like these stemming from a fictional context, this also being the way philosophical arguments often wade through complex thoughts. It works well for children preventing them from being caught up with loaded language or personal accounts. The



children's thinking skills were good; they showed enthusiasm for discussions and the opportunity to express their views.



Circle Game.



Milk and discussion.

- Children can grasp complex ideas about behaviour.
- They have clear ideas about right and wrong.
- They are forgiving.
- Working from a fictional premise works well.

3) Physical Play

The physicality of the games complemented the experience of the drama and the thinking that followed. For some of the children and their teachers, the games were an excellent icebreaker. During the games we were all equals, all taking part together, the teachers not leading but rather being led, as they become part of their group. This created an unusual and pleasing dynamic between children and teachers. It was a relaxing session for them because we had full focus of, and responsibility for the children. This created the opportunity for the teachers to step into different roles, discussing and evaluating their experience together with the children.

4) Project Management Skills

Monster Magic allowed Angela the opportunity to increase her confidence and expertise in the combined skills required to manage the project. Skills with specific computer programs need to be improved



children's thinking skills were good; they showed enthusiasm for discussions and the opportunity to express their views.



Circle Game.



Milk and discussion.

- Children can grasp complex ideas about behaviour.
- They have clear ideas about right and wrong.
- They are forgiving.
- Working from a fictional premise works well.

3) Physical Play

The physicality of the games complemented the experience of the drama and the thinking that followed. For some of the children and their teachers, the games were an excellent icebreaker. During the games we were all equals, all taking part together, the teachers not leading but rather being led, as they become part of their group. This created an unusual and pleasing dynamic between children and teachers. It was a relaxing session for them because we had full focus of, and responsibility for the children. This created the opportunity for the teachers to step into different roles, discussing and evaluating their experience together with the children.

4) Project Management Skills

Monster Magic allowed Angela the opportunity to increase her confidence and expertise in the combined skills required to manage the project. Skills with specific computer programs need to be improved



though planning, administration
in place for the development of the project.

B) Community Cohesion



"Meet our roller-skating zebra!"



"This bus is where Beau, Peachy, Fluffy and I sleep. Come in."

Tuesday Afternoon.

The session was open for anyone to come, villagers, teachers, siblings and parents of those who had already been. It was a fantastic high energy show, like a village pantomime, because all the people knew each other, it was just incredibly exciting and beautiful. Most of the children knew the story, the lines, the songs, the scary bits and the ending, and they wanted to show their family. *It was a social occasion, centred around the children and their show. It was "community cohesion" in practice, in other words having fun together on our village green; and felt like a good achievement and opportunity created.*

The environment of the village Green was an important element of the project in terms creating a sense of Monster Magic belonging to the village. Local people were proud that other schools to come to Nacton to take part.

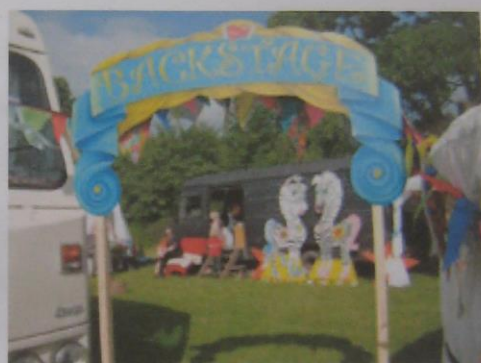


C) Meeting our Aims

We met our three main aims, which were to contribute to "community cohesion", to dispel some myths and stereotypes about travelling people and to encourage critical thinking.
See Appendix A for full details of the Aims.



Entering the Yurt.



The Backstage.



Inside the works truck.



At the table in Angela's bus.



FEEDBACK and COMMENTS

From Schools.

"We have had parents coming in to ask about Monster Magic all week because their children have talked incessantly about the Wolf and Marble Lou, and the little houses in vans. It has really touched them, they have loved it." **Sue, Nacton and Bucklesham Under 5's.**

"Lots more people must experience this." **Lesley Burrows. The Willows.**

"Fantastic, I really enjoyed joining in with that, which is not something I readily do." **Andrea, The Willows.**

"The moral that you were getting across was good. The other thing I liked was that the children got really involved in the drama."
Mary, Bealings Primary School.

"They really entered into your world" **Meryl, Nacton and Bucklesham Under 5's.**

"You should feel really proud of this it is a lovely achievement, I have never been to anything like it. There really should be more of it, the children need to think like this."
Mary. TA Bealings School.

"The children absolutely loved it. " **Mr Duncan Bathgate. Headmaster Bealings School.**

"The children had a wonderful time and are still talking about it." **Sam Sims, Head of The Meadows Montessori.**



"Denise and I are having a lifestyle change, let's buy a van!"
Laura, Nacton and Bucklesham under 5's.

"I loved the show, the Tent Mistress' costume was fantastic. The children got straight into it. Oh, I really liked the glitter." **Natasha Gunning, Orwell Park School.**

From Villagers.

"It is really lovely to have something happening like this on the green. We used to have more things like this, it brings people out."
Anne. Pensioner.

From Parents.

Many parents asked for drama classes, using these techniques of expressive story telling, dance and movement. This style inspires children, including those with special needs, as it is able to incorporate all moods and ideas, facilitating and fielding the ideas into shape.

"Georgina absolutely loved it she has not stopped talking about it and telling the story. She wants to live in a library bus too, she loved the children's tiny playroom."
Mrs Williams. Parent.

"This is inspirational. Children really need more of this sort of thing, looking at the big questions in life; these questions apply across the board and age groups. It is Brilliant. Well done."
Mrs Hill. Parent.

From the Children.

"The best thing I've seen in my whole entire life." James, 7

"Wow!" Alicia, 8.

"Great fun, loved it." Laura.

"I liked it when the wolf came in it really scared me." Rachel, 7.

"The camp fire is a good place to talk." Elliot, 7.

"I liked the bit when the wolf sniffed us." Ben, 5.



"I didn't like the wolf howling." Jamie, 5.
 "I loved the glitter, I just loved it." Amelia, 5.
 "I loved the peddler ringing his bell." Loren, 6.
 "I liked the glitter in our hands, I liked the sparkle of it." Amy, 7.
 "I liked the bit when we pulled wolfie's tooth out."
 "I liked dancing in the rain with the sunglasses." Alba, 7.
 "The wolf came and it was scary, but he turned out to be nice."
 Maud, 8.
 "I like where the children were in the nest and cosy, because it felt safe."
 Millie, 7.
 "I want to live in a trailer." Nathan, 8.
 "I liked it when we pulled out the wolf's tooth." Rachel, 6
 "The wolf helped the children get to their village." Alexander, 7.
 "I liked catching tails and jumping." Amy.



Sniff Sniff.



Ruby Dancing.



"Alakazoom!"



"Your emerald dress, Your Majesty."



The Peddler.



Music and dancing.



Glasses on for a different perspective.



The Crown.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT after the success of the Pilot Project.

Monster Magic was fully booked and the *feedback has been very positive*, and indicates that this will be a popular experience and way of accessing complex social issues with children. This indicates that a future tour would be well attended.

The *requests for classes* using the techniques under development may provide the experience Cirque Idyllic members require for their professional development in this area.

Local professional contacts have been made including **Ben Gross** from Herefordshire Achievement of Refugees and Travellers Education Section, who would like to host a series of workshops in his county next summer. **Holly Stoppart** the director with whom we worked very well, and who specialises in story telling and children's theatre is keen to give on going support to this project. **Nicky Wilding** a fine artist who worked on the props, artwork and games is also committed to touring with Monster Magic. **Robin Scarlet** a traditional folk-singer and costumier is also keen to support an ongoing project. **Jan Linnik** a secondary schoolteacher and actor, is based in Germany and is committed to being central to a tour next summer.



Cirque Idyllic Members.

Darren has discovered a talent for working with children, overcoming initial fears to develop a new skill, combining improvisation and creative narrating.

Angela has had the opportunity to research her ideas on interactive storytelling and build the technique through Monster Magic.

Cirque Idyllic is creating through Monster Magic, *the opportunity for a sustainable project for travelling artist*; developing the skills we have as theatre practitioners, artists and facilitators of critical thinking.

The Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month has been successful in producing a variety of experiences for local school children given by the travelling community; these including wagon painting, traditional dance, music and crafts. Monster Magic as a contribution to the history month has been received enthusiastically. Next year the history month could be the springboard for the tour.

MONSTERS ON TOUR

June-August 2010

Monster Magic as a two-fold theatrical and lifestyle experience for primary schools will remain the same. The performance works well for the age range, the games session breaks down barriers on many levels, especially between the teacher and the children. The project will therefore remain unchanged in its structure and basic content.

Impact.

The **impact of an outdoor outward reaching project** like this benefits the local community. We therefore wish to set up on other village greens or playing fields close to villages to create a social opportunity. Children bringing their parent and siblings into a familiar environment, that of the travelling show, is a role reversal that the children enjoy and gives them a sense of pride.

The Mongolian Yurt

The Yurt is in itself a **beautiful piece of craftsmanship**, adults and children are delighted by it. It provides socially accessible alternative dwelling, less challenging than our vehicles and caravans might be. It



crosses boundaries because of its cultural context and provides a bridge to the concept of nomadic lifestyles. On a practical level it can be erected anywhere flat, there are no guys or stakes required.



Detail inside.



The Bones.



EXTRA PHOTOS



The Yurt Mistress.



Showing dramas about forgiveness.



The writing on the wall.



The Pack down.

"Wow! What a fantastic week, aah is it really over." Angela.

Fin.

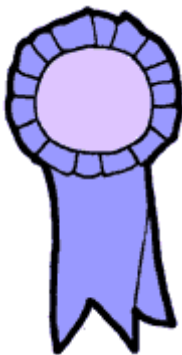


And finally some feedback from the kids themselves....





Local Press feature.....



.....well done folks